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Front Page
Edit Page
Other Page

Date:

Molotov's New Position Puts End to Obscurity

Some Observers Call
New Post a Big One;
Washington Says He
Is Just an Auditor

By the Associated Press

United States officials in Washington and western sources in Europe were divided Thursday on the meaning of V. M. Molotov's emergence from obscurity to the post of Soviet minister of state control.



V. M. Molotov

The European observers regarded the post as one of considerable importance, while United States officials regarded the position as not a major one and said that Molotov would be little more than an auditor of the Soviet government's finances.

Ministry Second Rate?

Likewise, they disputed interpretations that the new post meant a victory for Molotov's hard, Stalinist line.

Instead, they said, Molotov has now been given a second rate ministry which hitherto has concentrated on auditing government financial accounts and seeing to it that government directives are carried out. There is no sign that the job has been broadened and given more authority, they said.

Molotov almost certainly, in the view of these authorities, has now been knocked out of the running as a possible successor to party chief Nikita S. Khrushchev, a succession some western diplomats were forecasting.

The officials cautioned, however, that more information and further study would be necessary before any definite conclusions could be drawn from Molotov's new assignment.

Cite CIA Prediction

What the officials described as Molotov's apparent demotion is in keeping, they said, with a prediction made by Allen Dulles, chief of the central intelligence agency, in a speech Apr. 13 in Los Angeles before the world affairs council.

Dulles, whose job is to foresee Soviet intentions and leadership changes, said then about Molotov:

"Certainly a Stalinist at heart, he must have viewed recent (de-Stalinization) events with a heavy heart and with the knowledge that the recent deviations of which he has been openly accused are a prelude to his gradual retirement from the duties of his office."

No Policy Duties

Molotov's new role in the Kremlin hierarchy, it was said, will have no real policy making duties unless the charter of the ministry he takes over is completely revamped, a move which they consider unlikely.

These officials were frankly puzzled by the contrasting interpretations placed on Molotov's new job. They noted, however, that many Europeans had expected the old line Stalinist to grab more power in the wake of the policy reversals suffered by Russia in Poland and Hungary.

Most American officials, however, have insisted all along that there was no evidence that Khrushchev was slipping in his post as "chairman of the board" of the Kremlin leaders, despite the central European setbacks.

Molotov Old Bolshevik

Old Bolshevik Molotov was once Soviet premier and twice foreign minister.

A little over a year ago he was hinting at retirement by suggesting to his colleagues in an international conference that it was time "we gave way to younger men."

Molotov won the name of "Old Stone Pants" from western diplomats in postwar negotiations

because he could sit through weeks long talks and still say "no" a little more often and more firmly than anybody else.

His real name is Scriabin. His pseudonym Molotov derives from the Russian word "molot," meaning hammer.

A stubborn, plodding, methodical man, he often was ridiculed by Stalin but remained doggedly faithful to the dictator.

Resigned Ministry June 1

Molotov resigned as foreign minister June 1. He had had the job for a total of 13 years. Before that he had been premier for 12 years.

After Stalin's death there were signs that Molotov was slipping in the Soviet hierarchy. In October, 1955, he was obliged to confess publicly to an ideological error on an obscure point in a speech made seven months before.

He was omitted from the Soviet delegation when party secretary Khrushchev and Premier Bulganin went to Belgrade to make amends to President Tito for expulsion of Yugoslavia from the cominform in 1948. Molotov had incurred Tito's bitter enmity in that quarrel.

When Khrushchev exploded the anti-Stalin campaign in February, Molotov remained aloof

from it. His foreign policy was criticized by A. I. Mikoyan, Soviet trade expert, as "ossified."

Son of a Shopkeeper

His last major performance as Russia's "no" man was at the Geneva foreign ministers' conference in November, 1955, which negated the hopes for good will that had been raised by the previous four power "summit" conference attended by President Eisenhower.

Molotov himself had contributed to the illusion of Soviet good will during the "new look" period. On a trip across the United States he posed in a 10 gallon hat.

The son of a shopkeeper, he began his revolutionary activity at 16. At 25 he had known several periods of prison and exile.

He helped organize Pravda, met Stalin and corresponded with Lenin abroad on party matters.

After the Russian revolution, he became a secretary of the party's central committee and helped Stalin overcome Trotsky and establish the dictatorship. In 1930 he became premier.

Worked Out Nazi Pact

He replaced Maxim Litvinov as foreign minister in 1939. That was the signal for a some-

sault in Soviet policy, including the conclusion of a nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany which freed Hitler's hands for the starting of World War II.

After engaging in postwar conferences, he was relieved of his foreign ministry post in 1949 by Stalin. But he remained deputy premier and returned to the foreign ministry after Stalin's death.

If Khrushchev is to be believed, Molotov was marked for the blood purge in Stalin's last years. In 1952 or 1953, Molotov's wife, who was of Jewish origin, came under serious party criticism and was arrested. She had once been head of the cosmetics trust and the fish ministry. She was reported freed soon after Stalin's death.